

HEAVEN

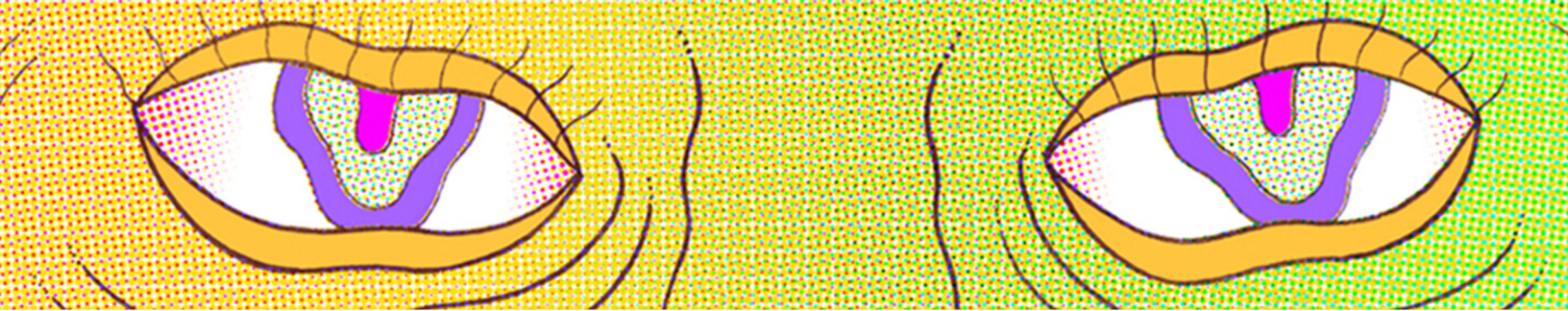


HEAVEN



A FILM BY
ROBERT HOPE
PRODUCED BY CANDICE NACHMAN





HEAVEN ON EARTH

A DOCUMENTARY SHORT FILM

DIRECTOR & EDITOR // Robert Hope

PRODUCER // Candice Nachman

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER // Maxwell Transue

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ABOUT THE FILM

LOGLINE //

A personal documentary about a naive aspiring actor who rents a shed on a fading ex-commune in Los Angeles and becomes friends with its aging matriarch, a former hippie, who is slowly becoming radicalized by far-right conspiracy propaganda in 2016.

SYNOPSIS //

Heaven On Earth is a personal documentary about an aspiring actor named Robert who moves to Los Angeles and rents a ramshackled shed on a former commune. Little does Robert know that the commune's aging matriarch, Margie, a former hippie, is slowly becoming radicalized by far-right conspiracy propaganda in early 2016.

Robert decides to document his experience as an odd friendship emerges between him and Margie. Margie confesses pieces of her past to him while Robert confides in her about the challenges of his new life. Robert becomes increasingly isolated and Margie slowly reveals an ulterior motive as she attempts to indoctrinate Robert into her philosophies. As the 2016 presidential election draws near, Robert loses his grip on what is fact and what is fiction.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

My initial intention for this film was to explore how far-right conspiracy theory ideology and paranoia take hold of people on a personal level. I found both my subject Margie and myself to be unique examples of this experience. Margie had a PhD in psychology from the University of Virginia and had been involved in new age spiritual communities for much of her life but she endured a painful family trauma in her 40s that changed her ability to trust others forever. I was an agreeable liberal millennial and an artist struggling with my mental health.

While experiencing Margie's relentless campaign to convert me to this ideology, I saw firsthand how someone could slip into that delusional mind frame under the right circumstances, no matter what background they come from. I witnessed how dangerous the combination of isolation, personal trauma, and the internet can be for someone's mind; how people harboring a great pain or resentment find that conspiracy thinking offers a simple explanation and a sense of purpose. Since I lived on this ex-commune 4 years ago, I've seen these types of viewpoints spread: the popularity of QAnon and Alex Jones, anti-vaxxers and films such as "Plandemic".

However, what I kept thinking about was that Margie tried to communicate something beautiful to me underneath the muck of her conspiracy ideology--an existential lesson on the need to come to terms with both exquisite beauty and terrible darkness within others and within one self. She saw herself in me and by sharing these lessons she thought she could save me from the mistakes she had made.

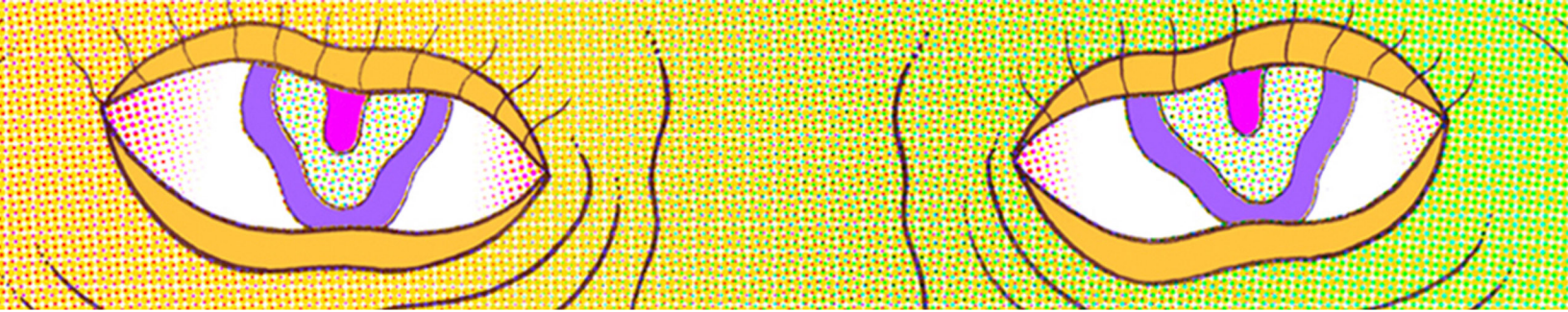
The tragic part for me was Margie's belief that the pathway to this wisdom was through a delusional world view and that she was spreading an ideology that was doing the opposite of what she intended. Over time though, I found something deeply vulnerable and human about her flawed attempt.

The burden for me as a filmmaker in this story was to honestly capture Margie while not presenting her unwellness in an exploitative way. I learned that the way to do this was committing to understand the humanity behind her delusions, without judging her or corroborating her beliefs. Facing these challenges reinforced for me what I believe is the point of making films: to ease the isolation of my fellow persons by creating windows through which we can see each other.









CREW BIOGRAPHIES

ROBERT HOPE //

*Robert Hope is a filmmaker originally from Northern California. He trained and worked professionally as a Shakespearean actor before he made a shift towards documentary filmmaking. He loves to tell personal character-driven stories about outsiders, mental health, and the intersection of people and place. Robert recently produced a queer sci-fi film set in the California redwoods, *Amanda Test_1*, which premiered at HBO's Outfest and found a large online audience on the sci-fi channel Dust.*

Robert is currently an MFA candidate in Film Production at the University of Texas at Austin.

CANDICE NACHMAN //

Candice Nachman grew up in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado where she began studying photography in 2000. Candice was the first in her family to finish high school and the only one to attend college where she received her BFA in Photography from Metropolitan State University in 2010 and later her MFA in Film Directing at UCLA in 2016.

Candice is a Director/Producer/Cinematographer and her first feature documentary NAUGHTY BOOKS premiered at Cinequest and has been acquired for distribution with Amazon and Netflix.

MAXWELL TRANSUE //

Maxwell Transue is an international composer, percussionist, and producer based in Los Angeles, California. As the founder of Verdant Sound Records, Maxwell has extensive experience in the recording studio as an audio engineer, session player, arranger, mixing engineer, producer, and composer for film, live theater, dance, and television winning several awards for his original scores including First Place and Audience Choice awards at several international dance film festivals.

His music is currently being used in works by dance choreographers and filmmakers Bret Easterling, Robert Bruce Hope, and The Kusanagi Sisters. As an independent artist Maxwell has performed alongside major artists such as Slow Magic, Low Leaf, Goodnight Cody, and Feed Me Jack. Maxwell is on staff at the Gloria Kaufman School Dance as the lead accompanist and currently touring a new original work "BRECHT" in collaboration with Kaufman Faculty member Bret Easterling.